

And Speaking Of Discoveries...

Unlike my Steve Wilkos show discovery, the following revelation is a great one! My daughter brought home a Weekly Reader from school – you know, it's like a newspaper for kids. We used to get those when I was in school too, and I really enjoyed them. So we're sitting in the waiting area of H & R Block waiting for my husband to get our taxes done, and my 9-year-old daughter says to me, "Mom, did you know that they found an animal that they haven't seen for, like, a really long time? They thought there weren't any more left in the world! It looks like a Furby!" We talked about extinction for a little bit, and then my daughter said she couldn't remember what the animal was called or where they found it. So when we got home, she showed me the Weekly Reader, and I found that she was talking about the pygmy tarsier. Scientists believed this type of primate went extinct because no one had seen any specimens for about 70 years, but they recently found two males and a female tarsier alive in Indonesia. The animals each weigh only about 2 oz.!

So yes, it's safe to say this is a much better discovery for me than the Steve Wilkos show. Here's hoping the pygmy tarsier can re-populate and once again establish itself as a thriving species! And thanks to the Weekly Reader which has been publishing great kid-oriented articles for decades. These stories help youngsters develop many different kinds of interests in the world around them!

It's The End Of The World As We Know It... And I Feel Fine

Every few years, it seems that people are worried about an Armageddon date. They chose some sort of date based on something and promptly report it to the media as the date the world will end. Nine years ago now, it was Y2K – do you remember how many people built shelters, stockpiled canned food and emergency supplies? I was due to have my first child as the 'millennium baby', and I was worried something catastrophic would happen; at the very least, the lights would go out in the hospital or something. My daughter arrived a few weeks early though, on December 21, 1999, so we were at home safe and sound to ring in the new year – and surprise, surprise, nothing happened. So it's not a shocker that people have pinpointed a new date for the Apocalypse; this time it's based upon an ancient Mayan calendar – well, some scholars' interpretation of it anyway. What will you be doing in 2012? According to some people, you should live 2011 to its fullest, because that's all we're going to get! The following article is from cnn.com and was written by A. Pawlowski.

Just as "Y2K" and its batch of predictions about the year 2000 have become a distant memory, here comes "Twenty-twelve."

The sun shines through the door of the Seven Dolls Temple, in the Maya ruins of Dzibilchaltun in Mexico.

The sun shines through the door of the Seven Dolls Temple, in the Maya ruins of Dzibilchaltun in Mexico.

Fueled by a crop of books, Web sites with countdown clocks, and claims about ancient timekeepers, interest is growing in what some see as the dawn of a new era, and others as an expiration date for Earth: December 21, 2012.

The date marks the end of a 5,126-year cycle on the Long Count

calendar developed by the Maya, the ancient civilization known for its advanced understanding of astronomy and for the great cities it left behind in Mexico and Central America.

(Some scholars believe the cycle ends a bit later – on December 23, 2012.)

Speculation in some circles about whether the Maya chose this particular time because they thought something ominous would happen has sparked a number of doomsday theories.

The hype also has mainstream Maya scholars shaking their heads.

“There’s going to be a whole generation of people who, when they think of the Maya, think of 2012, and to me that’s just criminal,” said David Stuart, director of the Mesoamerica Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

“There is no serious scholar who puts any stock in the idea that the Maya said anything meaningful about 2012.”

But take the fact that December 21, 2012, coincides with the winter solstice, add claims the Maya picked the time period because it also marks an alignment of the sun with the center of the Milky Way galaxy, and you have the makings of an online sensation.

Long Count 101

- The Long Count calendar was one of several created by the ancient Maya.

- It consists of the following units of time:

kin = one day

uinal = 20 days

tun = 360 days (18 uinal)

katun = 7,200 days (20 tun)

baktun = 144,000 days (20 katun)

- The calendar shows the number of days elapsed since the beginning date: August 13, 3114 B.C. (some scholars think the date is actually August 11, 3114 B.C.)

- The dates are written as numbers separated by periods in the following order:

(baktun).(katun).(tun).(uinal).(kin)

- July 20, 1969 – the date of the first moon landing – would be written as: 12.17.15.17.0

- December 21, 2012, would be written as 13.0.0.0.0 and the day after that as 0.0.0.0.1

Source: Howstuffworks.com

Type “2012” into an Internet search engine and you’ll find survival guides, survival schools, predictions and “official stuff” to wear, including T-shirts with slogans such as “2012 The End” and “Doomsday 2012.”

Theories about what might happen range from solar storms triggering volcano eruptions to a polar reversal that will make the Earth spin in the opposite direction.

If you think all of this would make a great sci-fi disaster movie, Hollywood is already one step ahead.

“2012,” a special-effects flick starring John Cusack and directed by Roland Emmerich, of “The Day After Tomorrow” fame, is scheduled to be released this fall. The trailer shows a monk running to a bell tower on a mountaintop to sound the alarm as a huge wall of water washes over what appear to be the peaks of the Himalayas.

‘Promoting a hoax’

One barometer of the interest in 2012 may be the “Ask an Astrobiologist” section of NASA’s Web site, where senior

scientist David Morrison answers questions from the public. On a recent visit, more than half of the inquiries on the most popular list were related to 2012.

"The purveyors of doom are promoting a hoax," Morrison wrote earlier this month in response to a question from a person who expressed fear about the date.

A scholar who has studied the Maya for 35 years said there is nothing ominous about 2012, despite the hype surrounding claims to the contrary.

"I think that the popular books... about what the Maya say is going to happen are really fabricated on the basis of very little evidence," said Anthony Aveni, a professor of astronomy, anthropology and Native American studies at Colgate University.

Aveni and Stuart are both writing their own books explaining the Mayan calendar and 2012, but Stuart said he's pessimistic that people will be interested in the real story when so many other books are making sensational claims.

Dozens of titles about 2012 have been published and more are scheduled to go on sale in the coming months. Current offerings include "Apocalypse 2012," in which author Lawrence Joseph outlines "terrible possibilities," such as the potential for natural disaster.

But Joseph admits he doesn't think the world is going to end.

"I do, however, believe that 2012 will prove to be... a very dramatic and probably transformative year," Joseph said.

The author acknowledged he's worried his book's title might scare people, but said he wanted to alert the public about possible dangers ahead.

He added that his publisher controls the book's title, though he had no issue with the final choice.

"If it had been called 'Serious Threats 2012' or 'Profound Considerations for 2012,' it would have never gotten published," Joseph said.

Growing interest

Another author said the doom and gloom approach is a great misunderstanding of 2012.

"The trendy doomsday people... should be treated for what they are: under-informed opportunists and alarmists who will move onto other things in 2013," said John Major Jenkins, whose books include "Galactic Alignment" and who describes himself as a self-taught independent Maya scholar.

Jenkins said that cycle endings were all about transformation and renewal – not catastrophe – for the Maya. He also makes the case that the period they chose coincides with an alignment of the December solstice sun with the center of the Milky Way, as viewed from Earth.

"Two thousand years ago the Maya believed that the world would be going through a great transformation when this alignment happened," Jenkins said.

But Aveni said there is no evidence that the Maya cared about this concept of the Milky Way, adding that the galactic center was not defined until the 1950s.

"What you have here is a modern age influence [and] modern concepts trying to garb the ancient Maya in modern clothing, and it just doesn't wash for me," Aveni said.

Meanwhile, he and other scholars are bracing for growing interest as the date approaches.

"The whole year leading up to it is going to be just crazy, I'm sorry to say," Stuart said.

"I just think it's sad, it really just frustrates me. People

are really misunderstanding this really cool culture by focusing on this 2012 thing. It means more about us than it does about the Maya."

He Said WHAT?

The continuing saga of Illinois' embattled governor just keeps getting more and more interesting. As his impeachment trial opened yesterday, Rod Blagojevich took to the tv airwaves to defend (?) himself. I saw clips of a few of his tv appearances, and that's why I included the little question mark above. It didn't seem to me that he was doing a good job of defending himself. In fact, the ladies on The View noticed the same thing, with them noting, "Seems like you're doing yourself more harm than good." The View ladies then hilariously chided the governor, asking him to say "I'm not a crook" – Richard Nixon-style. Blago refused.

And of course by now you've heard about the Oprah for Senator announcement he made on Good Morning America – Blago has admitted that he actually considered Oprah Winfrey to fill Obama's old Senate seat. I'm not even going to go there – there were too many other gems that came out of Blago's mouth yesterday. Among them:

On his Larry King Live appearance, Blagojevich launched into a bizarre analogy involving cowboys and steer to describe his situation... I'm not going to go into detail; it was quite lengthy, but it's worth looking up on youtube or somewhere if you're so inclined. WHAT was he TALKING about?!?

Back to Oprah for a minute. According to Blagojevich, Oprah has more influence than all 100 United States senators combined. She does have lots of dough; as well as an uncanny

ability to get women to diet and save money. But she doesn't have the power to declare war or pass legislation that changes lives... so no, Blago, not even close on that one.

Also on Larry King Live, Blago was shown clips of Saturday Night Live where they make fun of him, namely his thick mane of hair. "He looks like one of those Fisher Price toy people with its hair on backwards!" Too funny! But Blago didn't think so. "What show was that?" he asked. But a few sentences later, he talked about how they can make fun of him during skits or whatever and that he didn't care. But if he had never heard of Saturday Night Live as he acted, how would he know it was a show comprised of skits? He was just trying to insult Saturday Night Live by acting as though he had never heard of it!

And throughout the governor's press junket yesterday, he kept repeating – "The fix is in" referring to the "fact" that the Illinois House is impeaching him because they're out to get him – not because he did anything wrong. I agree with Blago on one aspect – his impeachment is inevitable. In the mean time, I have to admit how fun it is to watch this guy in action and marvel at the fact that he was ever elected to such a major public office. I think he might be certifiably nuts!

Boy, Was His Face Red...

I received an interesting email forward today about a letter someone wrote to the editor of The Arizona Republic newspaper. I checked it out on snopes.com to make sure the story was true and not just someone with too much time on their hands making stuff up. The story was true, although the letters that were reprinted in the email had been embellished

somewhere during the course of the email forward. Here are the reprints of the letters written to the editor:

A letter to the Editor;

Question of the day for Luke Air Force Base: Whom do we thank for the morning air show?

Last Wednesday, at precisely 9:11 a.m., a tight formation of four F-16 jets made a low pass over Arrowhead Mall, continuing west over Bell Road at approximately 500 feet. Imagine our good fortune!

Do the Tom Cruise-wannabes feel we need this wake-up call, or were they trying to impress the cashiers at Mervyns' early-bird special?

Any response would be appreciated.

Tom MacRae, Peoria

The correspondent received a response from Col. Robin Rand, commander of Luke AFB's 56th Fighter Wing, in the pages of that same newspaper the following day:

Luke Air Force Base was asked to respond to a letter writer's question about a "morning air show" he observed recently ("A wake-up call from Luke's jets," Letters, Thursday):

The "wake-up call" witnessed the morning of June 15 was a formation of F-16 jets from Luke Air Force Base lining up for a memorial service in Sun City at the gravesite for Air Force Capt. Jeremy Fresques, an officer assigned to Air Force Special Operations. Fresques gave his life in defense of our country while serving in Iraq.

It is unfortunate that at a time when our nation is at war someone would believe we have less than honorable and professional reasons for such a mission.

The commander of the fighter squadron was given the difficult duty of informing the family of Capt. Fresques on Memorial Day that the officer, a husband, son and Arizonan, had died in Iraq.

On behalf of the men and women at Luke Air Force Base, we continue to keep Jeremy and his family in our thoughts and

prayers.

Col. Robin Rand

Luke Air Force Base

Four days later, the newspaper also published a response from Lt. Col. Pleus himself:

Regarding "A wake-up call from Luke's jets":

On June 15, at precisely 9:12 a.m., a perfectly timed four-ship of F-16s from the 63rd Fighter Squadron at Luke Air Force Base flew over the grave of Capt Jeremy Fresques.

Capt. Fresques was an Air Force officer who was previously stationed at Luke Air Force Base and was killed in Iraq on May 30, Memorial Day.

At 9 a.m. on June 15, his family and friends gathered at Sunland Memorial Park in Sun City to mourn the loss of a husband, son and friend.

Based on the letter writer's recount of the flyby, and because of the jet noise, I'm sure you didn't hear the 21-gun salute, the playing of taps, or my words to the widow and parents of Capt. Fresques as I gave them their son's flag on behalf of the president of the United States and all those veterans and servicemen and women who understand the sacrifices they have endured.

A four-ship flyby is a display of respect the Air Force pays to those who give their lives in defense of freedom. We are professional aviators and take our jobs seriously, and on June 15 what the letter writer witnessed was four officers lining up to pay their ultimate respects.

The letter writer asks, "Whom do we thank for the morning air show?"

The 56th Fighter Wing will call for you, and forward your thanks to the widow and parents of Capt. Fresques, and thank them for you, for it was in their honor that my pilots flew the most honorable formation of their lives.

Lt. Col. Scott Pleus

Luke Air Force Base

To his credit, the complainant, Mr. MacRae, tendered a written apology which was published in The Republic on 9 July:

*Regarding "Flyby honoring fallen comrade" (Letters, June 28):
I read with increasing embarrassment and humility the response to my unfortunate letter to The Republic concerning an Air Force flyby ("A wake-up call from Luke's jets," Letters, June 23).*

I had no idea of the significance of the flyby, and would never have insulted such a fine and respectful display had I known.

I have received many calls from the fine airmen who are serving or have served at Luke, and I have attempted to explain my side and apologized for any discomfort my letter has caused.

This was simply an uninformed citizen complaining about noise. I have been made aware in both written and verbal communications of the four-ship flyby, and my heart goes out to each and every lost serviceman and woman in this war in which we are engaged.

I have been called un-American by an unknown caller and I feel that I must address that. I served in the U.S. Navy and am a Vietnam veteran. I love my country and respect the jobs that the service organizations are doing.

Please accept my heartfelt apologies.

Tom MacRae, Peoria

Well, anyway, I just thought it was an interesting email forward. And it was thought-provoking and even contained some valuable life lessons: don't jump to conclusions and appreciate everything in life. God Bless our troops!

Is Winning The Lottery Worth The Ultimate Price?

As I was making lunch today, I heard the following fascinating story on the radio, so I had to look it up and read it for myself:

The following article is from baltimoresun.com:

DANBURY, Conn. (AP) – On the day that Donald Peters died, he unknowingly provided financial security for his wife of 59 years and their family.

Peters bought two Connecticut Lottery tickets at a local 7-Eleven store on Nov. 1 as part of a 20-year tradition he shared with his wife Charlotte. Later that day, the 79-year-old retired hat factory worker suffered a fatal heart attack while working in his yard in Danbury.

On Friday, his widow cashed in one of the tickets: a \$10 million winner which, in her grief over her husband's death, she had put aside and almost discarded before recently checking the numbers.

"I'm numb," Charlotte Peters, 78, said at Connecticut Lottery headquarters in Rocky Hill.

Donald Peters usually bought the tickets for 10 weeks at a stretch, so the winning ticket he bought Nov. 1 for the Dec. 2 drawing was among several that Charlotte Peters put aside as she, their three children and two grandchildren coped with his sudden death.

"I was in the grocery store and I had it checked and they told me I was a winner," she said. "I had no idea how much it was."

She said she thought she had won \$6 million but was surprised to learn from lottery officials she'd won \$10 million.

Charlotte Peters has 60 days to decide whether to take a \$6 million pre-tax lump sum payment or stretch the winnings into 21 yearly payments of almost \$477,300 each.

She does not yet know what she will do with the money.

"I've always wanted a Corvette, but I don't think I'll buy one. I'll stick to a small car. I might go to Mohegan Sun," she said, referring to the casino in Connecticut. "I'm going to go home and sit and think."

The Peters children think their father would have appreciated the irony.

"He'd be very mad, he just passed away and she won a lot of money," said Brian Peters, one of the couple's three children. "He'd say, 'Figures!'"

Even though Mr. Peters was not aware of his "luck", in effect he paid the ultimate price to win the lottery. Was it worth it? Probably not. Any sane person would rather have his life, health, and loved ones rather than an extremely large windfall if there was a choice. Since that's a poll I'd rather not take, here is one about what you would do if you won a huge amount of money in a lottery.

[poll id="4"]

Biological Treasure Trove

As a change of pace from the usual "the world is falling apart"-type articles about conservation, I decided to share the following article from CNN.com about an area of Asia called the Mekong Delta region. Scientists are calling the place a "biological treasure trove" because of its rich

diversity of flora and fauna. 1,068 species were discovered there between 1997 and 2007 alone; including 15 new species of mammals. Fascinating stuff AND something to read that contains *promising* news about the status of the Earth, rather than the usual bad news and negativity. Here is the article – I find the part about the hot pink cyanide-producing dragon millipede particularly interesting – there's a picture of it on cnn.com, see the link at the bottom of this post.

(CNN) – A rat believed to be extinct for 11 million years, a spider with a foot-long legspan, and a hot pink cyanide-producing “dragon millipede” are among the thousand newly discovered species in the largely unexplored Mekong Delta region.

The “dragon millipede” is among the 1,068 new species discovered in the Mekong Delta region.

more photos » The region, including parts of Vietnam and five other countries, is home to 1,068 species found between 1997 and 2007, according to a World Wildlife Fund report released this week.

Some of the creatures were not lurking in fertile floodplains or tropical foliage.

A scientist visiting an outdoor restaurant was startled to see a Laotian rock rat among the nearby wildlife. The hairy, nocturnal, thick-tailed rat, which resembles a squirrel, had been thought for centuries to be extinct.

“There is a certain amount of shock because our scientists will sometimes see something that doesn't fit anything they know,” said Dekila Chungyalpa, Director of the Fund's Mekong Program. “They run through a catalogue of wildlife in their brain, asking themselves, ‘Have I seen this?’”

Perhaps a more startling discovery than the rat was a bright green pit viper scientists spotted slithering through the rafters of a restaurant in Khao Yai National Park in Thailand.

The Fund dubbed the Mekong a "biological treasure trove." The organization's report "First Contact in the Greater Mekong" says 519 plants, 279 fish, 88 frogs, 88 spiders, 46 lizards, 22 snakes, 15 mammals, four birds, four turtles, two salamanders and a toad were found.

Scientists are still trying to determine if they have uncovered thousands of new invertebrate species.

Scientists are discovering new species at a rate of two per week, said Chungyalpa, who said the reason for publishing the report now was twofold.

"We realized that we should highlight these discoveries in part because of the legacy of war and conflict in the region," she said. "There's an urgency with the threat of development in the Mekong countries."

A horned bovine found in 1991 living in the evergreen forests of the Annamite Mountains of Laos and Vietnam has not been found in recent years, she said.

Timber development and mining industries are encroaching. There are 150 large hydropower dams that have been constructed along the Mekong river, and another 150 are slated to be built, according to the Fund. Dams that can trap and kill fish are at different stages of planning in the Greater Mekong.

High variation in geography and climate zones that enabled species to flourish are now jeopardized by climate change, said Chungyalpa.

War is always a threat in countries touched by the Mekong River, particularly Burma. Also known as Myanmar, the largest country by geographical area in mainland Southeast Asia has been ravaged over the years by conflict, political instability and natural disaster.

This summer, for example, the United Nations reported that as

many as 100,000 people were killed by a cyclone that hit Myanmar. The country's ruling military junta blocked the outside world for weeks before allowing aid to flow into the region.

There are cultural obstacles to protecting rare species, too. Many restaurants serve them as food. Restaurants often have rickety bamboo floors that one can look through to see cages filled with exotic animals, Chungyalpa says. The more exotic the animal, the more status it often bestows on the person who consumes it.

"Reports [like the WWF's] are important because these regions can be educated," said Maureen Aung-Thwin, the director of The Burma Project, which is funded by the George Soros Foundation and supports local Indonesian organizations working toward an open society.

"People are taking climate change more seriously and even the ruling junta have a forestry NGO. There are glimpses of hope," said Aung-Thwin. "But it's also a situation where someone could step forward and say 'We don't need this' and cut it all down."

WWF said it is working with governments and industry to plan the conservation of more than 231,000 square miles of forest and freshwater habitats that cross borders with all countries in the Greater Mekong.

The preceding article was published on CNN.com. To read the entire original article, [click here](#).

Now THAT Is One HORRIBLE Stage Manager

Wow – what happened here? Due to a props department mix-up, an actor was doing a suicide scene with a real knife instead of a fake one. Luckily, he wasn't killed, but this qualifies as a bit more than a simple mistake, wouldn't you say? Perhaps I'll think twice about offering to stage manage anything in the future – apparently there's a lot at stake. And for you actors who read this, how much trust do you have in your props people? And how much will you trust them after reading something like this?

From Time.com

by Adam Smith

Try this for an Agatha Christie plotline: performing on stage inside Vienna's Burgtheater, one of Europe's oldest and grandest, an actor takes a knife to his throat in his character's desperate attempt at suicide. As audience applause fills the opulent theater, blood pours from the actor's neck. But something's not right. Buckling and staggering his way off stage, the actor collapses to the floor. That's because the knife, and the harm that it's done, are both tragically real. Unfortunately for Daniel Hoevels, a 30-year-old actor from Hamburg, those pages from a murder-mystery came to life last Saturday night during a performance at the Burgtheater of Mary Stuart, Friedrich Schiller's play about the wretched life of Mary Queen of Scots. Rushed to the nearby Lorenz Bohler hospital having sliced through skin and fat tissue but thankfully not his main artery, Hoevels was fortunate to survive. "Just a little deeper," said Wolfgang Lenz, a doctor who treated him, "and he would have been drowning in his own blood."

The police investigation into the calamity points more to a foul-up than foul play. Viennese police say they're not

probing the possibility of attempted murder; press reports had speculated a “jealous rival” could have had a hand in Hoevels’ injury. Instead, investigators are focusing on possible negligence within the props department of Hoevels’ Thalia Theater ensemble. According to local media, the company picked up the knife in Vienna to replace one brought from their Hamburg base that was then found to be defective. One possibility: that props staff forgot to blunt that new blade, which, police say, still had the price tag on it.

Hoevels himself seems to have put the snafu behind him. “I am now absolutely fine again,” he told local media, “but I will always for the rest of my working life have a strange feeling about this scene.” After reprising the role Sunday, albeit with neck bandaged, Hoevels headed back to Hamburg Monday in preparation for his role in Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. In that play, the long-suffering title character winds up shooting himself in the head. Someone might want to double-check the gun.

Speaking Of Blagojevich...

In my previous post about Governor Rod Blagojevich of Illinois, I forgot to include a [funny clip from the Daily Show](#) featuring Mr. Blag.... Mr. Blavo, um Governor Smith.

And if you have trouble pronouncing his Serbian surname, here is a pronunciation guide from wikipedia.com:

Milorad “Rod” R. Blagojevich (pronounced /blə'gɔɪəvɪtʃ, born December 10, 1956) is an American politician from the state of Illinois.

A Stricken State

I took the tv away from the kids today (not that they watch it that much anyway) so I can watch the events in Illinois unfold as their governor Rod Blagojevich is arrested on corruption charges. No surprise there, just an interesting story being followed by a former resident of that state. In fact, we left Illinois for good in 2003 just months after Blago assumed office, which was mostly a coincidence, but I would say that his being elected to the governor's office did add to the feeling we had that the state was falling apart. It was that obvious from the beginning that Blago was no good. Over the years, I've been following news stories in Illinois by reading dailyherald.com, an online version of a suburban newspaper. Every time there was anything in the paper related to Blago, there was no shortage of comments from readers about the purported corruption of the governor. In October of this year, the governor's approval rating was a measly 4%. And today, the you-know-what has hit the fan. The governor of Illinois is in prison – the second gov in a row from that state to serve time, as a matter of fact. As we speak, err, as you read this, former Illinois Governor George Ryan is probably watching the Blagojevich coverage from the federal prison he currently calls home. I'm just curious if it makes anyone nervous that our new President-elect is from a state that can't seem to keep its leaders out of the slammer. Hopefully, Barack Obama can set a new standard for politicians from Illinois – that would be refreshing.

But in the meantime, watching Blago's saga unfold is compelling – the reporters on CNN are saying that the breadth of the corruption is unimaginable. They're saying Blago engaged in a 'crime spree' while in office and the details

are troubling – including allegations of \$8 million in funding being pulled from a children's hospital because its CEO did not contribute \$50,000 to Blago's campaign. And I'm not writing this to pick on Blago or make any sort of political statement – it's not that I'm the type of person who smiles at the misfortune of others either, but hey, he did this to himself. I just feel badly for the residents of Illinois who trusted this man to be their leader and their representative, and now they're forced to watch with the rest of the world while he is exposed for what he truly is, giving their state a horrible reputation in the process. The main victims in this situation are the Blagojevich family, and it's sad that Rod's two young children will probably have to grow up now without a father in their lives. And unfortunately, Blagojevich is just the latest in a long line of corrupt officials from the Land of Lincoln. Since the early 1970's, 3 former Illinois governors have served time in prison, not including Blagojevich who is a current governor. Here's to hoping the politicians of Illinois can get their act together amidst their growing tradition of disreputableness.

Sleep With The Angels

The title of this blog post is based on a book called *To Sleep With the Angels*, which details the horrible tragedy of the Our Lady of Angels school fire in Chicago, Illinois. Ninety-two children and three nuns perished on December 1, 1958 – 50 years ago tomorrow. The incident became the precedent and the inspiration for sweeping changes in laws and regulations regarding fire safety; such as the installment of sprinkler systems in public buildings, automatic fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire drills, and the end of grandfather clauses which eliminated older buildings from having to comply to fire

regulations. Our Lady of the Angels had undergone a fire inspection just a few weeks before the fire, but because it was an older building, it did not have to comply to all the fire codes because of grandfather clauses. I came across [this website](#) about the tragedy, and it's full of fascinating info related to the inferno – photos, news articles, maps, models, survivor lists and stories, and more. Here is a little excerpt from the website olafire.com about the cause of the fire:

Was It Arson?

Although the cause has never been *officially* determined, all indications point to arson. A boy (age 10 at the time, and a fifth grader in room 206) later confessed to setting the blaze, but subsequently recanted his confession. He was more afraid of confessing to his mother and step-father than to the police. The boy confessed to setting numerous other fires in the neighborhood, mostly in apartment buildings. In his confession, he related details of the fire's origin that had not been made public and that he should therefore not have known. While there was strong evidence that he was indeed the culprit, neither he nor anyone else was ever prosecuted, at least in part because the catholic judge in the case felt he should protect the Church. Officially, the cause of the fire remains unknown.

I'm curious if the boy who confessed is listed in the survivor lists. Somewhere else I read that another reason the judge didn't convict the boy is because it would have meant a sure death sentence for him. One thing remains true – this was a tragedy of great proportion, and the damage is still being felt by those who witnessed the atrocity and those who survived and their families. This is evident when you read some of the survivors' stories on the website listed above. Many of them have not spoken much about that day, and it seems that almost all of them remember it like it was yesterday. My husband and I both grew up in the Chicago area, and we agree that most people we knew were associated with the tragedy in one way or another – whether they witnessed it, survived it, or watched it unfold on television. It's been 50 long years, and there are still raw wounds. It was agreed upon by all those that knew Michele McBride, a survivor of the Our Lady of Angels fire, that she died of her wounds sustained in the fire, and that was as recent as 2001. From

olafire.com:

Michele was burned over 60% of her body and hospitalized for four and a half months. She underwent numerous operations which continued for years afterwards. The fire that ravaged her body left her in continuous, lifelong pain. Her pain finally ended in July 2001 when she died of multiple organ failure, no doubt a result of damage inflicted by fire so many years before. In 1979 Michele wrote a book ("The Fire That Will Not Die") about her experience the day of the fire, and her life thereafter. Michele's sister, Dae Hanna: "Michele died on July 4th 2001, from long term physical problems suffered from the fire many years ago. May she rest in peace. She never had a day without pain in her legs and joints. May she rest in peace. She disagreed vehemently with many of the theories in the 'To sleep with the angels book'. Her book THE FIRE THAT WILL NOT DIE was certainly well titled, and the only first hand account of that day. May she rest in peace."

I was reminded of the 50th anniversary of the Our Lady of Angels school fire by an article in the dailyherald.com, prompting me to do some research into the tragedy and to share with others the olafire.com website which contains so much helpful information. My thoughts and prayers are with all of the families involved in this horrible chapter of Chicago's history.

